

TV movie 'Dallas' to be reviewed for accuracy Filed 7/8/77

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Docu-dramas on TV claim to re-create actual events. But they occasionally are accused of distorting history to heighten drama, of offering surmise as 100-proof fact.

Worried about this and the growth of docu-drama as a form of evening entertainment programming, CBS-TV chief Robert Wussler has taken an unusual step with a planned TV movie, "Four Days in Dallas."

He says CBS News will review it for accuracy.

"Dallas," about the 1963 slaying of President John F. Kennedy, traces the last days of accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald and of club owner Jack Ruby, who fatally shot Oswald after JFK's death.

Wussler, who during a 15-year stint as a CBS News producer helped prepare reports on Kennedy's assassination, says CBS News won't be asked to say if the show should or shouldn't air.

But he says if there's any doubt about the film's accuracy, its broadcast — scheduled for next spring — will be delayed and corrections made, or it will be postponed indefinitely.

He said "Dallas" is based in large part on the Warren Report, which found that Oswald acted alone in killing Kennedy.

But he said involving CBS News in a review of this basically entertainment

project wasn't prompted by fears of "fairness time" demands from critics who dispute the report's findings.

"No, it was not," he said by phone from New York. "It was prompted by our viewing of docu-dramas of other networks that we felt were major steps toward a revisionist theory of history."

He also said he didn't want children who watch docu-dramas to grow up with an erroneous view of history, noting that when kids see things on the tube "they think that's the real world."

"If we start doing historical things and we're loose with the facts, I think it's going to come back and haunt us, both from TV critics and people in the government."

Wussler, the only current network head with a news background, was asked if a CBS News review of docu-dramas will become the network's standard operating procedure for such programs.

"No," he said. It'll happen only "when we decide to go forward with a sensitive subject, a subject of public concern which still may be ... an open matter or open controversy."

"Then we'll ask the president of our news division (Richard S. Salant) or other experts there about it. We don't want to put them in the position of making final judgments..."